

## Message Text

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17

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-10

OMB-01 SCCT-01 SAM-01 SAJ-01 NIC-01 SAB-01 AID-05

ACDA-05 EUR-12 AF-06 SSO-00 /097 W

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R 031525Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3164

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USINT BAGHDAD BY POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 2825

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PLO, EG, XF

SUBJECT: PLO-EGYPTIAN "CRISIS"

REF: CAIRO 2309 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH LEADERS ON BOTH SIDES SEEM ANXIOUS TO CIRCUMSCRIBE CURRENT PLO-EGYPTIAN "CRISIS", WE BELIEVE PLO LEADERSHIP WILL CONTINUE TRYING TO MAKE SINAI DISENGAGEMENT AS DIFFICULT FOR SADAT AS POSSIBLE. END SUMMARY.

1. FACED WITH EGYPTIAN GOVT'S UNEXPECTEDLY STRONG RE-  
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ACTION TO FEB 26 PLO EX COMM WARNING ADDRESSED TO "ARAB

NATION", PLO LEADERSHIP--AS NOTED REFTTEL--INDEED APPEARS TO BE BACKTRACKING A BIT. PLO (Wafa) PROPAGANDA APPARATUS IN NOW EMPHASIZING IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING "DIALOGUE" WITH GOE, AND IT BLAMES "A FOREIGN NEWS AGENCY" FOR HAVING MISINTERPRETED AND DISTORTED EX COMM STATEMENT. Wafa ALSO CONTINUES INSIST STATEMENT WAS NOT DIRECTED AGAINST ANY ARAB COUNTRY, INCLUDING EGYPT. HOWEVER, PLO WEEKLY, PALESTINE REVOLUTION, ON MARCH 1 KEPT SUBJECT ALIVE BY ACCUSING GOE OF HAVING VIOLATED RABAT SUMMIT RESES BY (A) ENDORSING INTERNATIONALIZATION OF JERUSALEM, AND (B) ALLEGEDLY SUGGESTING THAT PLO AUTHORIZE KING HUSSEIN TO NEGOTIATE WEST BANK DISENGAGEMENT ON BEHALF OF PALESTINIANS. WE NOTE ALSO THAT FAROUQ QADDUMI, DESPITE HIS LATEST EFFORTS TO SOFT-PEDAL SIGNIFICANCE OF EX COMM STATEMENT, HAS CLAIMED IT NOW UP TO ARAB STATES IN GENERAL AND ALGERIA IN PARTICULAR TO "TAKE NECESSARY MEASURES" TO RESOLVE CURRENT EGYPTIAN-PLO CONTRETEMPS. (AN NAHAR, MAR 1)

2. WE AGREE WITH REFTTEL'S ESTIMATE THAT 'ARAFAT AND CO. MAY HAVE MISCALCULATED DEPTH OF SADAT'S REACTION TO EX COMM STATEMENT. ANOTHER CONTRIBUTING FACTOR, WHICH PLO HIGH COMMAND OUGHT TO HAVE FORESEEN, WAS LIKELIHOOD THAT PLO SPOKESMEN AND PROPAGANDISTS, HAVING BEEN ENCOURAGED TO ESCALATE PLO CRITICISM OF SECOND-STAGE SINAI NEGOTIATIONS, WOULD GET CARRIED AWAY BY EVER-LATENT PALESTINIAN FEARS AND EMOTIONS AND OVERDO MATTERS BY VENTING THEIR SPLEEN ON FRIENDS AND FOE ALIKE.

3. IN ANY EVENT, PLO LEADERSHIP APPEARS ONCE AGAIN IN POSITION OF WANTING HAVE ITS CAKE AND EAT IT TOO. WE BELIEVE 'ARAFAT IS STILL DESIROUS OF PRIVATELY KEEPING IN STEP WITH EGYPTIANS, BUT HE HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY WORRIED ABOUT BEING SEEN AS WILLING COLLABORATOR IN SADAT'S DEALING WITH USG. ALTHOUGH HE WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE FOR TIME BEING TO ACCEPT PRIVATELY SADAT'S ASSURANCE (IN HOPES THEY WILL PAY OFF IN TERMS OF PROMISING PLO "MODERATES" SOME FORM OF EFFECTIVE ASSOCIATION WITH ME SETTLEMENT PROCESS), 'ARAFAT IN OUR VIEW IS NOT RPT NOT LIKELY TO TAKE ANY RISKS IN DOING SO UNLESS AND UNTIL HE HAS CONCRETE PROOF THAT SOME NEW PLO

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"VICTORY" (E.G., PLO PARTICIPANTS IN CREATION OF WEST BANK STATE OR PERHAPS, AT MINIMUM, AND INVITATION TO ATTEND GENEVA CONFERENCE) WILL RESULT.

4. IN MEANTIME, 'ARAFAT WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY CONTINUE TRYING TO MAKE SINAI DISENGAGEMENT AS DIFFICULT FOR SADAT AS POSSIBLE. TO DO OTHERWISE WOULD (IN HIS VIEW) LEAVE HIM AND HIS "MODERATE" FOLLOWERS IN REAL DANGER OF BEING

OUTFLANKED AND OUTBID BY "REJECTIONISTS" AND OTHER FEDAYEEN DIE-HARDS (INCLUDING SUBSTANTIAL SEGMENT OF FATAH RANK-AND-FILE) WHO ARE INTENT ON DISCREDITING AND OVERTHROWING HIM.

5. IF WE HAVE LEARNED ANYTHING ABOUT ABU AMMAR IN RECENT YEARS, IT IS THAT HE WILL GO TO ANY LENGTH TO AVOID BE-COMING ANOTHER SHUQAIRY OR OTHERWISE LOSE IN COMMANDING POSITION WITHIN FEDAYEEN MOVEMENT. SHOULD SADAT'S PROMISES PROVE EMPTY AND PLO CONTINUE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM SETTLEMENT PROCESS, 'ARAFAT WILL SOONER OR LATER BE FORCED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN HIS EGYPTIAN CONNECTION AND HIS SURVIVAL AS HEAD OF PLO. BASED ON HIS PAST TRACK RECORD, WE THINK HE WOULD LOSE NO TIME UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES IN SHEDDING HIS "MODERATE" SKIN AND TRYING TO BEAT "REJECTIONISTS" AND OTHER PALESTINIAN EXTREMISTS AT THEIR GAME. WE FEEL SURE HE ALREADY HAS THIS OPTION IN MIND AND THAT CURRENT PLO CRICICISM OF EGYPT AND KISSINGER APPROACH IS DESIGNED IN LARGE MEASURE TO PAVE WAY FOR HIS POSSIBLE ADOPTION OF ULTRA-RADICAL LINE IN NOT TOO DISTANT FUTURE. HOUGHTON

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** NEGOTIATIONS, PEACE PLANS, LIBERATION FRONTS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 03 MAR 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** johnsorg  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1975BEIRUT02825  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D750074-0783  
**From:** BEIRUT  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1975/newtext/t19750390/aaaaddbv.tel  
**Line Count:** 136  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION NEA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 75 CAIRO 2309  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** johnsorg  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 30 JUN 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <30 JUN 2003 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <24 NOV 2003 by johnsorg>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
05 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** PLO-EGYPTIAN "CRISIS"  
**TAGS:** PFOR, EG, XF, PLO  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006